

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

DIANA MAYO, nineteen, beautiful, aristocratic English girl, determines to make an expedition into the Arabian desert from Biskra. Her brother, AUBREY MAYO, by whom she has been brought up, virtually as a boy, tries to dissuade her. So does JIM ARBUTHNOT, who loves Diana and wants to marry her. At a ball given to celebrate her departure she tells him she has none of the feelings of a woman, has never been kissed and can obey no man. Her expedition into the desert is led by MUSTAFA ALI, an Arab with a fine outfit of well-bred horses. Disturbing signs appear before the journey is a day old. Diana is captured by SHEIK AHMED BEN HASSEN and taken a prisoner to his caravan, where she is subjected to his passionate attentions. Diana is served by an Arab maid and by GASTON, a young Frenchman who has long been attached to the Sheik's entourage. Ahmed's attentions become so distasteful that Diana while out riding with Gaston runs away into the desert.

camp, with the Eastern disregard for time that relegated till to-morrow everything that could possibly be neglected to-day. Near her one of the older men, more dignified in his observance than the generality of Ahmed Ben Hassan's followers, was placidly absorbed in his devotions, prostrating himself and fulfilling his ritual with the sublime lack of self-consciousness of the Mohammedan devotee.

Outside his own tent the valet and Henri were sitting in the sun, Gaston on an upturned bucket, cleaning a rifle, and his brother stretched full length on the ground, idly flapping at the flies with the duster with which he had been polishing the 'Victory' sedan. 'You're a little bit better,' said

her as she curled up on the divan with Kopeck, who had followed her into the tent. 'No, Madame. Something more serious this time. It's a history of this very curious tribe of Ahmed's. They are different in so many ways from ordinary Arabs. They have been a race apart for generations. They have beliefs and customs peculiarly their own. You may, for instance, have noticed the singular absence among them of the strict religious practices that hold among other Mohammedans. Ahmed Ben Hassan's tribe worship first and foremost their Sheik, then the famous horses for which they are renowned, and then and then only—Allah.'

rapidly with frequent little bursts of gay laughter. The Persian bound was grimacing at the sight of the Arab's head as Diana appeared, and, rising, went to her slowly, rearing up against her with a paw on each shoulder, making clumsy efforts to lick her face, and she pushed him down with difficulty, stooping to kiss his shaggy head.

She looked away across the desert beyond the last palms of the oasis. A haze hung round about, shimmering in the heat and blurring the outline of the distant hills. A tiny breeze brought the acrid smell of camels, the thought of the camp, the whine of the tackling over the well sounded not very far away. Diana gave a little sigh. It had all grown so familiar. She seemed to have lived no other life beside this nomad existence. The friendship of the camel faded into a kind of dim remembrance, the time when she had travelled ceaselessly round the world with her brother seemed very remote. She had existed then, filling her life with expeditions, and now she was thinking that she was lacking in her nature, and now she was alive at last, and the heart whose existence she had doubted was burning and throbbing with a passion that was consuming her.

She turned away from the well and the camp with a very tender light in them. Everything she saw was connected with and bound up in the man who was lord of it all. She was very proud of him, proud of his magnificent physique, of his beauty and strength, and over his wild, turbulent, followers proud with the pride of primeval woman in the dominant man ruling his fellowmen by force and fear.

The old Arab had finished his prayers and rose leisurely from his knees, looking at the girl and smiling. All the tribesmen smiled on her, and would go out on their way to win a nod of recognition from her. She faltered a few words in stumbling Arabic in reply to his long, flowery prayer, and with a look of high taste a hasty retreat into the tent.

"She paused beside the Vicomte, "Is it another novel?" she asked shyly, indicating the steadily increasing pile of manuscript.

"No," said he, his chair, resting his arms on the rail, twirling a fountain pen between his fingers, and smiled at

Saint Hubert shrugged. "He believes in a God," he said evasively, turning to his writing.

Diana studied him curiously as he bent over his work. She smiled when she saw the mental picture she had drawn of Saint Hubert before he came, and contrasted it with the real man under her eyes. During the week that he had been in the camp he had forced her liking and compelled her confidence by his sympathetic charm and his goodness. He had seemed so difficult position with a delicacy and savoir faire that had earned him her gratitude. He had saved her a hundred humiliations with a tact that had been as spontaneous as it had been effective. And after they had become friends between them of the comradely they had for this strange leader of a strange tribe. What had been the origin of the friendship between these utterly dissimilar men—a friendship that seemed to go back to the days of the world's infancy? She looked at her and she pondered over it quietly on the divan, smoothing the knight's huge head resting on her knee.

The Vicomte wrote rapidly for some time and then flung down his pen with an exclamation of relief, gath- ering up the papers he had scattered, and stacking them in an ornate heap on the table, swung round on his chair again. He looked at the girl's slender little figure lying with the unconsciously graceful attitude of a child against the heaped-up cushions, her face before the lovely light of the lamp, and he felt an odd rough, gratifying emotion stirring in him. The quick sympathy that she had aroused from the first moment of seeing her had given place to a deeper feeling that moved him profoundly, and with it a chivalrous desire of doing something to please her, between her and the inevitable disaster that loomed inevitably ahead of her.

She felt his concentrated gaze and looked up. "You have done you work?"

"All I can do at the moment. Hence must unravel the truth; he has a reason for his opinion. It is an admirable person; I could never do without him. He bullied me when we were together; at least that

"Madame!"

He had sprung to his feet, and she looked up at him miserably, her head held out in swift contrition. "Oh, forgive me! I shouldn't have said that to you. I am so sorry. I have been so unkind. I am grateful. Forgive me and my rudeness. It must be the heat, it makes one very irritable, don't you think?"

He ignored her pitiful little subtlety and raised her outstretched quivering fingers to his lips. "I will honor my word with your lending," he said, with a touch of the old world chivalry that was often noticeable in him, "my life is at your service."

But as he spoke his voice changed. The touch of her cold fingers sent a rush of feeling through him that for an instant overpowered him.

She let her hand lie in his, and for a few moments she avoided his eye and looked down at the rough head in her lap. Then she met his gaze frankly. "Your offer is too rare a thing to put on one side. If you will be my friend, and my confidante, my friend?"—she faltered, turning her head away, and her fingers lying in his trembled slightly.

He started and crushed the hand he was holding unknowingly, as the hand of a friend, not a woman, a seigneur's friend! He realized that in the last few moments he had forgotten the Sheik, had forgotten everything, swept off his feet by an intense emotion that staggered him with its unexpectedness, except the love and helplessness of the girl beside him. His head was reeling; his calmness, his loyalty, his earlier feelings of dispassionate pity had given way to an extreme agitation that was rushing him headlong and threatening to overwhelm him. His heart beat furiously, and he clenched his teeth fighting to regain his usual sangfroid. The emotional temperament that Diana had divined from his voice had sprung uppermost with a bound, overthrowing the rigid repression of his nature. The heat in his ears was not enough to master himself to crush the madness that had come upon him.

(To Be Continued.)

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